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THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Comp survey open now

The Church Compensation Survey for the Southern Baptist Convention, conducted every two years by state Baptist conventions, GuideStone Financial Resources in Dallas and LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, is currently underway. The results are utilized by church finance and personnel committees to establish competitive compensation packages for ministers and support staff.

Ministers, church secretaries, and maintenance/custodial staff are urged to participate in order to generate the most complete and accurate reports. Survey sponsors have estimated the survey takes less than ten minutes, and customized reports on the survey's results will be available online in the summer of 2012.

To participate, visit www.GuideStone.org/CompensationSurvey. Deadline is May 31, 2012.

Historic nomination

Luter to stand for SBC president at June annual meet

NEW ORLEANS (BP and local reports) — In a historic move certain to draw national and international attention, African-American pastor Fred Luter will be nominated for president at the June annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in New Orleans.

Luter, senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans and current SBC first vice-president, told his congregation that he's willing to have his name placed in nomination, a step that could lead to his election as the first non-white president of the convention that broke away from other Baptists before the Civil War over the issue of slavery.

"He and his wife (Elizabeth) have been praying for months," Johnell Thomas, pastor of membership at Franklin Avenue Church, told Baptist Press. Thomas said Luter "did announce that he would allow his name" to be placed in nomination in addressing the congregation.

Luter is the only announced candidate so far. In August, Luter had said he was "80%" leaning toward the idea of allowing his name to be placed in nomination. "It is an awesome responsibility [to serve as SBC president]," he told the Tennessee Baptist & Reflector newspaper then. "I don't want to take it lightly or for granted."

In that same interview, Luter said his goal, if elected, would be to "bring us together as a convention" so that "we can truly be the body of Christ. ... We need to major on the things that have made this convention great through the years — evangelism and discipleship."

Luter will be nominated by David E. Crosby, pastor of First Church in New Orleans. "Fred has been among Southern Baptists for more than 20 years as a pastor. He has taken a church that was at death's door, to the largest worshipping congregation in the state of Louisiana among Southern Baptists," Crosby said.

"He has been a great evangelist and has baptized thousands of people through these years of ministry."

Crosby cited Luter's diligence and determination as a pastor, Bible expositor, evangelist, and spiritual leader as characteristics that qualify him to lead Southern Baptists. Luter's family life — his love for his wife Elizabeth and his two children, Kimberly and Fred "Chip" III — is a model for Southern Baptist ministers, Crosby said.



TO BE NOMINATED — Fred Luter, senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans who currently serves as the first African-American first vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), has confirmed that he will allow his name to be placed in nomination for SBC president when the convention holds its annual meeting in June in New Orleans. Luter is the first African-American Southern Baptist ever to be nominated for the post at the largest Protestant denomination in the world. (BR photo)

The fact that Luter is African-American would make his election an historic moment for Southern Baptists, Crosby said. "Our election of Fred Luter as the first African-American president of the SBC will send a great, hopeful, powerful message to our city, our culture, our convention, and our country," Crosby said in an interview.

"For many, it will make them rethink who Southern Baptists are, and it will help us reach the new diversity that we find in our cities. For Southern Baptists to elect Fred Luter heralds a new era of inclusion, of working together in our diversity."

"It is a statement that people of all ethnic groups making up the Southern Baptist Convention are honored."

Luter, who often calls himself a "street preacher from the Lower Ninth Ward," has made a significant mark on Southern Baptist life. A popular preacher at conferences and seminaries across the country, Luter became the first African-American to preach the keynote sermon at the Southern Baptist Convention in 2001.

His election as first vice-president at last year's annual meeting in Phoenix also marked the first time an African-American has served in that role.

He is a sought-after speaker at Mississippi Baptist meetings and in the state's churches, having addressed the Mississippi Baptist Convention on more than one occasion.

Known for boldness in proclaiming the Bible, Luter is a native New Orleansian who became pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in 1986 at a time when the church was fading as the surrounding neighborhoods were in transition. Under his leadership, the church draws nearly 7,000 worshippers on Sundays.

Deeply involved in Southern Baptist life, Luter has served in leadership roles on the local, state, and national levels. The New Orleans Baptist Association and the Louisiana Baptist Convention have tapped him for numerous leadership positions, and he served as a member of the committee that worked on the revision of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

"Fred Luter's support of our local association is stellar," Crosby said. "We could not do what we do without him or Franklin Avenue Baptist Church."

Crosby also commended Luter for his pastoral leadership following Hurricane Katrina. Franklin Avenue Church's building was inundated with water and most of the church's members were displaced, but Luter's commitment to the congregation never wavered.

"Fred returned to New Orleans to continue his ministry even though I am confident he could have moved on to other places and pulpits," Crosby said, "but his heart was drawn here and he demonstrated the faithfulness of a pastor who cares for his flock."



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Why are we Christians?

We all know the type — the guy who wears the latest clothing from his favorite university, who plasters his car with stickers from the school and stakes a wood cutout of the school's mascot in his front yard on game day. He's constantly bloviating about his sports acumen (harking back to his days as a "star" athlete) and offering unsolicited advice to anyone within earshot as to what he would have done if he had been the coach.

He's the armchair quarterback, the weekend warrior, the shadow coach saturated in school colors. He's been there, done that, and knows it all. If you don't believe it, just ask him. Yet he is never seen at any of the university's games, never darkens the school's campus, and doesn't even particularly care for the university. He just thinks it's cool and wants to be with the "in" crowd. He's a fake. We all know the type.

Unfortunately, that's also a disturbingly accurate description of too many church members in modern America — including Mississippi. They're gung-ho for Jesus, all right. They have the T-shirts and personalized, red-letter Bible to prove it. They are in their pew every Sunday, loudly proclaiming in song their fealty to God and providing amens to the sermon at every opportunity. They attend the right church events and rub elbows with the right people. Every time the church doors are opened, they are there (especially if there's food involved). Their outside appearance is just fine, yet on the inside they don't mean a word

"WELL, WE USED TO ATTEND THE CHURCH OF METAPHYSICAL LIGHT. THEN WE MOVED TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE NEW FULLNESS. THESE DAYS, YOU CAN FIND US AT THE CLAIRVOYANT CONSCIOUSNESS. YOU WOULD LOVE OUR PROPHET. HE'S JUST AN OLD FARM BOY FROM ARKANSAS."



of what they're saying or doing. It's all social artifice. It's all fake.

Why do they do it? There are probably as many reasons as there are fakers. Some crave the power and influence that have eluded them in other areas of their lives. Some seek business or social connections from which they can profit. For others, it's just a family tradition to be a member of a church somewhere, even if it means nothing.

Does the church need additional workers for the Royal Ambassadors program? Sorry, too busy. How about being a part of that mission trip to eastern Europe? Sorry, too dan-

gerous. The church's homeless shelter needs volunteers to prepare meals and clean up afterward? Sorry, too unappealing.

After all, those jobs are done under the radar and could be overlooked by the prominent people in the church. It is all about us, isn't it? It is all about us getting noticed, isn't it? Even if we dress up and put signs in our yards and do all those other fake things, it's all right as long as we can maintain the masquerade, isn't it?

Far too many of us spout the right words and profess to be His followers, without ever walking in His footsteps. Far too many of us claim to be on the team, without ever leaving the stands. Far too many of us talk the talk, but don't walk the walk. The world is not unaware of our insincerity. Sadly, such behavior will have eternal consequences (Matthew 7:22-24).

People see only the outside; that's why we are often so easily fooled by hidden evil. The Lord can see the inside. He can see into our hearts and He can discern our every secret motivation. All our thoughts and deeds are known to Him.

Church is not a social club, and we're not part-time members. Jesus left us with the most important mission in the history of mankind, as described in Matthew 28:18-20. The gravity of our responsibility to see Jesus' plea accomplished cannot be overstated, especially as our country and our world drift farther and farther from the Truth.

We must take up the cross. We must help bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus, and we must do it now before it's too late. Let us throw off the insincerity and false motives that so entangle our witness today, and get the job done before Jesus comes again — and He is coming.

Final in a two-part series

If you read my column two weeks ago, you know that I have decided to give up on the Great Commission Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. In fact, I challenged all Southern Baptists to give up on the idea, as none of us can produce the resurgence we seek.

The bottom line is this: We face a real, evil, spiritual enemy who does not want us to experience a Great Commission resurgence, and victory will come only when we realize that the battle is God's, not ours.

He alone is the divine warrior when His people face an uncrossable sea (Exodus 14:13-14), a domineering giant (1 Samuel 17:1), or an invading enemy force (2 Chronicles 20:1-23). It is in His strength, His might, and His armor that we ever experience victory (Ephesians 6:10-11). His Spirit can accomplish what our might and power cannot (Zechariah 4:6).

Giving up, though, does not mean that we do nothing. It means we passionately, corporately seek the only One who can bring about the resurgence. Consider these practical ways to lead your church to give up and turn to God:

- Preach a sermon series on "impossibility passages" to illustrate our great need for God's help. Apart from His presence,

GUEST OPINION:



I'm giving up on Resurgence

By Chuck Lawless
International Mission Board
Richmond, Va.

we cannot love our enemies (Matthew 5:44), forgive those who sin against us (Ephesians 4:32), give thanks in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18), love our wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25), or make disciples of all people groups of the world (Matthew 28:18-20).

From the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3) to the worship of the nations in heaven (Revelation 7:9-10), the Bible calls God's people to do what we cannot do in our own power: follow God with all of our being. Preach that Word — and let the challenges in that Word drive your church to prayer.

- Study great awakenings in the Scriptures and in American history, and use those stories to illustrate what God does when broken people seek Him. Teach about God's work in the First Great Awakening in response to the prayers of Jonathan Edwards

and George Whitefield.

Speak of five Williams College students whose prayer beneath a haystack contributed to America's Second Great Awakening. Tell the story of Jacob Lamphier, the man God used to ignite the Prayer Revival of 1857-58.

Help your church see what God has often done through just a few believers who prayerfully want Him to work.

- Ask God to raise up a group of church members who long for renewal in your church, and who understand that renewal will come only through prayer. Meet weekly with them to pray for a Great Commission resurgence in your congregation. Be willing to start small, knowing that a few faithful, obedient prayer warriors can accomplish much. Lead them to repent of any known sin. Study passages on the power of prayer. Fast together. Patiently and persistently, ask God to

touch your congregation in a way that cannot be explained apart from His power. Pray, and then pray some more.

- Partner with other congregations to pray corporately for one another. God alone knows what miracles He might work if every Southern Baptist church were praying for a resurgence in two or three other churches. Build that prayer time into your church's Sunday morning service. Pray for the churches by name.

- Occasionally use technology to join the other congregations live as you pray for each other. In God's economy, two needy, weak churches that admit their need and look to Him together are more potent than the "strong" church that seeks Him little. Indeed, it will likely be a church that is desperate for God that will be the center of any Great Commission resurgence.

I long for those days when we simply expected God to move among us. I long for more Southern Baptists who give up, and pray.

Lawless is vice president of global theological advance for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, headquartered in Richmond, Va. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Obama compromise decried as 'gimmick'

Critics calling change a mere accounting detail

WASHINGTON (BP) — U.S. President Barack Obama bowed to pressure Feb. 10 and announced a change in the way employees of religious organizations will receive free contraceptives that can cause abortions, but the compromise fell far short of what is needed to protect religious liberty, say evangelical and Catholic organizations.

"It is an attempt to deal with a matter of religious conviction with an accounting gimmick," Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, told Baptist Press.

The controversy began when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in January finalized a rule requiring private insurance plans to cover all Food and Drug Administration-approved contraceptives, including "emergency" ones such as Plan B and Ella that can block implantation and kill the embryo — an action that pro-life groups and many Christians view as an early abortion.

Under the rule, drugs would be free for employees and covered as part of the Obama universal health care mandate known as Obamacare to offer free preventive services.

The HHS rule included an exemption for most churches, but that exemption does not cover Christian colleges and schools or faith-based hospitals and social service programs. Programs such as Catholic Charities, Prison Fellowship, and



FALLING SHORT — U.S. President Barack Obama (right), with U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, announces his change to what has been called the contraceptive mandate. Religious leaders said it fell short of what is needed and still violates religious liberty. (BP photo courtesy of The White House)

the Southern Baptist Convention's GuideStone Financial Resources would be affected.

GuideStone's president released a statement before Obama's press conference saying simply, "we will not provide abortifacients."

Obama said Friday that the burden on providing emergency contraceptives would fall on insurance companies, and that the coverage still would be free. "If a woman's employer is a charity or a hospital that has a religious objection to providing contraceptive services as part of their health plan, the insurance company — not the hospital, not the charity — will be required to reach out and offer the woman contraceptive care free of charge without co-pays and without hassles," Obama said.

"The result will be that religious organizations won't have to pay for these services and no religious institution will have to provide these services."

Land and others said that an insurance company's money is fungible (freely exchangeable), and that a religious employer would still be providing the funding to pay for an employee's abortion-inducing drugs.

O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources in Dallas, called it an "approach that does not address the issues at hand for Southern Baptists who oppose so-called contraceptives that can and do cause an abortion."

GuideStone provides health insurance coverage to 60,000 people, including pastors and missionaries.

"The President's statement today is an insulting affront illustrating a basic lack of understanding that this issue will not be solved by sleight-of-hand word games," Hawkins said. "It is a fundamental matter of religious liberty that threatens the very coverage of those dedicated persons who serve our churches and affiliated organizations. GuideStone

will never depart from the core convictions it has held dear for decades regarding the sanctity of life."

Obama's statement does "not take into account the needs of many of the oldest and largest church plans in the nation," GuideStone said.

Said Land, "(Obama) showed a total lack of awareness of self-funded insurance programs like GuideStone. ... GuideStone cannot comply with this, because GuideStone would be forced to pay for abortifacients (drugs that induce abortions), which we find unconscionable."

"This administration has shown a very disturbing trend of when religious freedoms collide with sexual rights, sexual rights trump religious convictions every time. If the insurance company is forced to provide the coverage, the insurance company is going to pass the cost on to the person paying for the insurance — us."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, a leading voice in pressuring the White House, also said the compromise fell short and called for a complete rescinding of the mandate.

Wa. OKs gays

OLYMPIA, Wash. (BP) — Washington state Gov. Christine Gregoire has approved a bill that would legalize homosexual marriage, but voters in the state likely will get the last word. A bill legalizing homosexual marriage passed the Washington state House of Representatives on Feb. 8, by a 55-43 margin, one week after it cleared the Senate, 28-21. Democrats control both chambers, and Gregoire, a Democrat, has signed it. That technically would make Washington the seventh state to redefine marriage, but churches and traditional groups could put it on hold by collecting 121,000 valid signatures by June 6. If that happens, it will go on the November ballot, and voters could reverse the law. A simple majority vote is required. "Ultimately the people will decide on marriage [in Washington]," Joseph Backholm, executive director of the conservative Family Policy Institute of Washington, previously told Baptist Press, "and in 31 out of 31 states, they've voted not to redefine marriage, and we don't expect that Washington will be any different." Based on past history, a ballot vote on homosexual marriage likely will be close. In 2009, a far less controversial law dealing with homosexual domestic partnerships survived at the ballot, but it was closer than people thought it would be. By a 53-47% margin, voters retained the law granting homosexual couples all the legal benefits of marriage without the name.

Looking back

10 years ago

Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board and a former member of First Church, Clinton, is the keynote speaker for a church-wide banquet at the church celebrating the church's 150th anniversary.

20 years ago

Wyatt Hunter, widely-respected pastor emeritus of First Church, McComb, died recently. He was pastor of the McComb congregation for 20 years, from 1938–1968, during which time the church experienced significant growth.

50 years ago

Over 1300 participate in the evangelistic conference at Gulfshore Assembly Feb. 5–7, with First Church, Dallas, pastor W.A. Criswell speaking at the closing Wednesday morning session.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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By Charles Marx, 1932-2004
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JXHUU

Clue: R = B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Fourteen: Three

WHEN YOUR QUIET TIME BECOMES NOISY

Many, many years ago they use to call the time spent with God in the morning a devotion time, meditation time, and then it became a quiet time. Many of us did find a quiet time. It is a time with God, a time in His Word, a time of prayer, a time of reflection on where you have been and a time of vision and expectation as to where you are going and what the Lord may have in store for you. On some days it may be five minutes and on other days it may be 30 minutes to an hour. Generally speaking for me and for most folks who I talk with it is difficult to find that time every day though most of us would acknowledge that nothing is more important.

The other day I sat down with an open Bible and some paper and pen to make notes on my thoughts. I begin my quiet time soon to realize that my quiet time had become incredibly noisy. In one room the television was blaring the latest crisis in the world. A radio was on in another room reminding me of the weather, traffic, and other stuff that they wanted to feed me. The phone rang with an actual person on the other end needing information and more than any help that I could provide. Some dogs were walking outside my window barking at each other. My quiet time was not quiet at all.

So it settled in on me that my quiet time seemed to be about as noisy as any other part of the day. I sat there for a while in the noise trying to figure out how to get to the quiet. As I contemplated my predicament, I thought of all of the people who have a sincere and passionate desire to have a quiet time with the Lord before they get started with a day full of people. They too must struggle with noise in the quiet.

A myriad of folks came to my mind including moms, who are trying to get kids awake and out of bed before they are off to school. There are dads who have major responsibilities with family issues before their other responsibilities of work kick in. There are teachers who have children, food, husbands, classroom preparation, and personal issues all surrounded by TV noise, music blaring, the dog barking, and a snake that has escaped. I thought of doctors trying to get ready for a busy day of caring for people's needs and an emergency crashes in on them that they must deal with. None of us are immune to the noise that breaks into our quiet time. So what do you do? Well, let me make two or three suggestions that may help as you get alone with God.

First of all, examine the noise. As I thought about the

noise that had come to my own quiet time, I realized that not all but much of the noise I was either creating or allowing. Now there are some external noises that I cannot do much about except ignore, but I can leave the TV off. I do not have to listen to stuff on the radio. I can refocus the clamor in my own mind and just determine to meet with God. The things you can take control of, do so in order to have a time alone with the Father. As you examine Jesus' life, you will find Him doing that during His busy ministry. He would get up early and go out into a solitary place. He would go to the garden in the evening where He could find solitude. Or maybe He escaped to those places where no one knew for silent periods in His ministry. Was it always quiet where He tried to get away to? No, for there were encounters there. There were people there and there were also probably those moments that were rewarding because of the significance of a time with God. All I am saying is that for me and maybe for some of you, you cannot do something about all of the noises in life, but you can do



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

something about some of it and it will help.

The second thing you might try is to expel the noise. Now after an examination you may come across some things that interfere with your time alone with God consistently. They may not be loud and clamorous, they may just be distractions. If you do not take the initiative to expel them from the classroom time with the Master, they will probably always be sitting there at a desk near you pulling your attention away from what the Lord is trying to

say to you. Expel them! Many of life's noises have an off control or at least a way to quieten or ignore them. You must act to expel the noise!

A final thought is to experience the noise. Put your laser mind to work and focus on hearing only the sounds of the Lord. Like the mother in a room filled with people that may be noisy who hears the slight cry of one child and immediately recognizes that sound belongs to her child, you can develop a spirit that is so sensitive that regardless of all of the clamor around you, you hear Him. His voice is different. His voice is encouraging, corrective, and compelling. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). So experience not just noise but experience the clear sounds from heaven to your heart.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

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Failing our children

By Jimmy Porter
Mississippi Baptist Christian
Action Commission

It all started about 2:30 p.m. and ended around 6:30 p.m. at the MS State Capitol on Thursday, February 2nd.

It was during this time that HB 16, better known as the "Child Protection Act" and "Child Rape Protection Act," was introduced by Judiciary B committee chairman



Porter

Rep. Andy Gipson in the House of Representatives.

HB 16 is a bill supported by the pro-life community and others, and it is designed to put some teeth into the law in order to curtail teenage pregnancies and statutory rape.

The latest figures from 2010 by the MS State Dept. of Health reported that there were 5,573 unmarried, teenage births and they further reported this number by age and race, as shown in Chart A.

The MS State Dept. of Health also reported in 2010 that of the 2,297 abortions performed in MS, 344 of them

2010: Unmarried Births by Age and Race

Age	Total	White	Non-white
Under 15	111	27	84
15-19	5,462	1,980	3,482
Total	5,573	2,007	3,566

Chart A

were by girls up to age 19, and they further reported these numbers by age and race, as shown in Chart B.

Sixteen is the age of consent in Mississippi, and a live birth or an abortion under that age is probably, if not always, due to statutory rape. In a national study by the Population Reference Bureau, it was reported that nearly 66% of teenage births were sired by males 20 years and older.

The perpetrators of these crimes deserve to be punished. You would think by doing a quick analysis of these numbers above that all members of the MS House would be in support of this bill, a bill to protect our children. Not so!

Even though there have been numerous cries for bipartisan support from the media, Democrats

and some Republicans, it became quite clear that political unification in the best interest of our children was not going to happen that day.

After three hours of sitting and observing the debate and opposition to this bill (intense at times), it was evident that the "game was on."

This bill - despite suggested changes to make it stronger - could have been and should have been supported by everyone. It finally passed with the vote of 106 yeas, 9 nays and 7 present (those who did not choose to vote either way).

After Rep. Andy Gipson introduced the bill, Reps. Cecil Brown and Adrienne Wooten of Jackson, Rep. Steve Holland of Plantersville and Rep. Bob Evans of Monticello raised several questions and offered numerous amendments. Rep. Ed Blackmon of Canton offered one amendment that was passed with a unanimous voice vote. Rep. Wooten suggested in her arguments that to pass this bill would put an undue burden

2010: Abortions by Age and Race

Age	Total	White	Non-white
Under 15	14	3	11
15-19	330	65	265
Total	344	68	276

Chart B

and expense on existing agencies. The Chairman replied that he was more concerned about protecting Mississippi's children than he was the cost and burden it might place on an agency. His comment brought the Speaker's gavel down and a reprimand as several of us in the gallery burst into applause.

Then, as it came time to vote, Rep. Wooten asked for the bill to be read aloud - 11 pages in its entirety. It became evident the floor actions were not all about the bill but more of a power struggle and a test for Speaker Philip Gunn.

The following representatives voted against HB 16: Willie Bailey, Billy Broomfield, Reecy Dickson, James Evans, Esther Harrison, David Myers, Willie Perkins, Omeria Scott, and Rufus Straughter. Representatives who were present but did not vote were: Bryant Clark, Tyrone Ellis, Bob Evans, John Hines, America Middleton, Adrienne Wooten and Charles Young.

On more than one occasion members of the MS Legislative Black Caucus have stated on the floor of the House a need for legislation to protect the children of Mississippi. They had such an opportunity on Feb. 2nd yet out of the 16 names listed

above, 15 of them are members of the Black Caucus.

It astounds me when 15 out of the 35 members of the Black Caucus voted NO or refused to support HB 16 in light of the number of teenage pregnancies and abortions among the nonwhite population.

Many of our Representatives have supported this bill in the past and I thank you. I thank those of you who voted for HB 16 even though you might have had a question or two. I especially thank those of you who are Democrats and the 20 members of the MS Legislative Black Caucus who voted YES: Earl Banks, Ed Blackmon, Kelvin Buck, Kimberly Buck, Clara Burnett, Credell Calhoun, Alyce Clarke, Angela Cockerham, Linda Coleman, Mary Coleman, Deborah Dixon, Chuck Espy, George Flaggs, Joe Gardner, David Gibbs, Gregory Holloway, Robert Huddleston, Robert Johnson, Sara Thomas, and Percy Watson. Your vote helps to start the ball rolling to better protect our children from rape and unwanted pregnancies. The bill has a long way to go but our children are worth the battle. To see other bills we are monitoring, go to www.ChristianAction.com and click "2012 Legislation" under the heading Legislation and Politics.

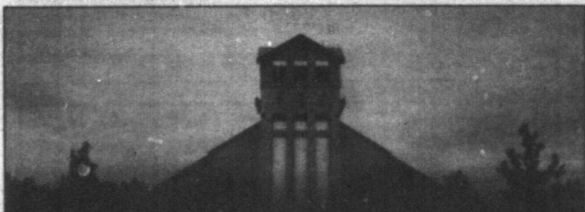
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JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Pratt licensing

1. **First Church, Winona**, licensed David Cole Pratt to the ministry Jan. 29. He is a sophomore at Holmes Community College. Shown are David Pratt (father), pastor Chris Aldridge, Cole Pratt, Cindy Pratt, and Jordan Pratt.

2. **West McComb Church, McComb**, ordained Brian McGrath and Sammy Quin as deacons Jan. 22. Shown are Wilma McGrath, McGrath, pastor Vann Windom, Quin, and Wanda Quin.

3. **Slayden Church, Marshall Association**, met and exceeded their \$15,000 goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering by receiving \$15,467. Rusty Fair, pastor.

4. **Northcrest Church, Meridian**, licensed Charles Blankenship to the gospel ministry Jan. 29. Shown is deacon chairman Ben Shirley presenting the license to Blankenship, along with Elizabeth Blankenship and children Charlie, Katie, and Ethan.

5. Nineteen people from **West Heights Church, Pontotoc**, received certificates for reading the Bible through in 2011. Shown are the recipients.

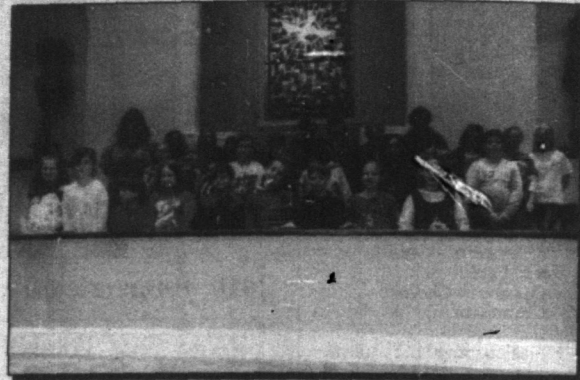
6. The children and youth of **Central Grove Church, Aberdeen**, presented the Christmas musical *The Most Accurate Forecast* Dec. 14, 2011, directed by Vickie Langford. Shown are the participants.

7. **New Haven Church, Weir**, held a deacon ordination service for Loyd Ray and Johnny Cox Jan. 29. Shown are Ray, Roy Hawkins, pastor Jim Ballard, and Cox.

8. The Master's Hands puppet ministry of **Tangipahoa Church, Summit**, will perform *Our Chains are Broken* Feb. 25, 6 p.m., at Bogue Chitto Church, Tylertown. For booking questions, call (601) 341-1314.

9. The **Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie**, WMU group held their fall kick-off luncheon recently. Shown are the participants.

10. **Standing Pine Church, Walnut Grove**, held a deacon ordination service for Freddie Terrell on Jan. 15. Shown are Jim Burns, pastor, and Terrell.



6. Central Grove Church, Aberdeen



2. West McComb Church ordination



7. New Haven Church, Weir



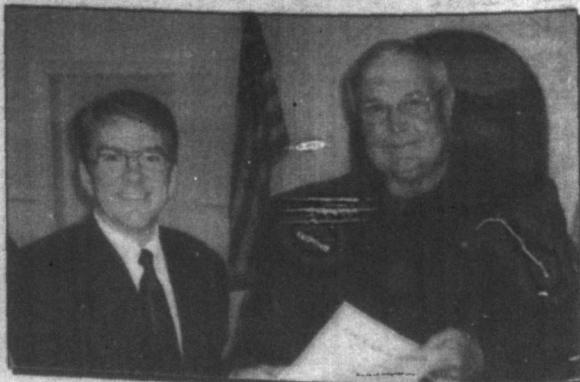
4. Blankenship licensing



9. Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie



5. West Heights Church, Pontotoc



10. Standing Pine Church, Walnut Grove

COLLEGE NEWS

1. Rated among the best in the USA and Canada, Mississippi College's elite table tennis squad finished No. 1 in the Dixie Division tournament at the University of Alabama. Ranked No. 3 among the 150 colleges and universities playing the Olympic sport in North America, Mississippi College was led by its delegation of talented players from China during its visit to the Tuscaloosa campus on February 4.



3. Shearer and Herrington

2. Hundreds of students participate in Mississippi College's Career Day 2012 recently. Recruiters from hospitals, school districts, and others made up the 80 visiting employers.



4. Eduardo and Brock

3. Shown at the opening reception for the Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible exhibit are (left to right) Melissa Shearer, a senior English major from Hattiesburg, and Chaise Herrington, a junior history major from Laurel. The exhibit will be on display at the Sarah Gillespie Museum on William Carey University's campus until February 16.

4. Moss Point native and Coca-Cola CEO John Brock and his wife Mary were guests at Mississippi College for the dedication of a classroom in the School of Business named after his parents. Shown are MC

School of Business Dean Marcelo Eduardo and Brock.

5. Blue Mountain College will participate in the statewide higher education program to help guide students and families through the process to obtain federal student

aid. Sponsored by the Mississippi Student Financial Aid Office, Mississippi College Goal Sunday will be held from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on February 25 in room 217 of Fisher-Washburn Hall on the BMC campus. The session is for all students interested in higher education - not just prospective BMC students. The annual one-day event is to provide assistance to prospective higher education students and families in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For more information, visit www.mscollegegoalsunday.org or contact the BMC Office of Financial Aid at (662) 685-4771 extension 145.

REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. First Church, Vicksburg: Revival, Feb. 26 - 29; Barry Corbett, speaker; Tommy Sparkman, music.

STAFF CHANGES



1. The Wilsons

1. Salem Church, Raymond, has called Michael Wilson as youth minister. He is shown with his wife, Brandi, and children, Anna Claire and Paxton.

2. Barnes Crossing Church, Saltillo, called Jackie Spencer as pastor Jan. 22. He is shown with his wife, Gloria.



4. Oneal and Franklin

3. Unity Church, Georgetown, has called Keith Smith as pastor. He is shown with his wife, Jane, and daughter, Maura.

4. Evergreen Church, Shubuta, has called Richard Oneal as music director. He comes with his wife, Angie. Shown are Oneal and pastor John Franklin.



2. The Spencers



3. The Smiths

JUST FOR THE RECORD

1. Calvary Church, Louisville, will host Ronnie Cottingham in concert Feb. 19, 11 a.m.

2. Ackerman Church, Ackerman, will host the Chuck Wagon Gang and the Joyful Noise Quartet in concert Feb. 18, 6:30 p.m. A love offering will be received.

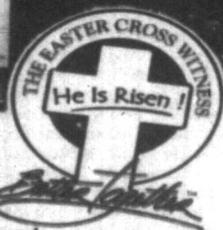
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1. Five William Carey University theatre majors received awards at the 2012 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) held in Daytona, Fla., January 31-February 4. Students competed against 73 college and university programs from eight states. Design awards are given in two separate categories, David Weiss and Barbizon. Only one first place and an honorable mention is awarded in each category. Chris Permenter, a freshman from Oak Grove, placed first in the David Weiss Design Competition for his costume design of "Crow and Weasel," Permenter receiving a cash prize and certificate. Jana Barkley, a freshman from Picayune, and Billy Burkes, a sophomore from Meridian, received Barbizon Design honorable mentions in applied arts for their puppet design from "The Princess and The Dragon." Stephanie Keller, a senior from Picayune, received a Barbizon Design honorable mention for her make-up and hair design for "The Diviners," and Zach Lancaster, a junior from Picayune, received a Barbizon Design honorable mention for his sound design in "Wait Until Dark."



2. Jones and King

2. Jack Jones, former tennis player and coach for William Carey University, is shown with Tommy King, president of WCU, in front of the tennis honors board bearing Jones' name preceding the dedication ceremony for the Jack Jones Soccer-Tennis Field House on February 5.

N.Y. state elected officials siding with city churches

NEW YORK (BP) — With the deadline past when churches will no longer be allowed to meet in New York City public schools, the New York State Senate overwhelmingly approved a bill that would allow worship services to continue.

The bill still needs approval from the Assembly and the governor, but the Assembly speaker expressed doubt that the bill would move forward.

"I think the way the Senate is taking it up, it's seriously flawed," Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, a Democrat from Manhattan, said, according to The New York Times. "It would open up the schools to anybody. It might include the Ku Klux Klan."

"If you're going to do anything, you're going to have to make the city make a determination as to what's an appropriate use of the schools."

Assemblyman Nelson Castro, a Democrat from the Bronx who supports the legislation, said the issue particularly affects his constituents. "It is my responsibility to protect my community. In my district, the Bronx Household of Faith and the Love Gospel Assembly have been directly affected by the discriminatory decision of the City of New York to prohibit worship in schools."

In a case involving the Bronx Household of Faith, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the New York City Board of Education is authorized to

prohibit any use of school buildings within its district.

"About a year and a half ago, the Love Gospel Assembly burned down and needed suitable space for a limited time to accommodate a congregation of 500 people," Castro said. "Due to this unconscionable action, this church was denied a space in several schools in my district."

New York City Council member Fernando Cabrera, who also represents the Bronx, has been leading the effort to reverse the New York City Department of Education's ban on churches meeting in schools, which is to take effect Feb. 12.

He called the Senate's passage of the bill Feb. 6 "a real testament to the power of bipartisan leadership."

"We now call on Speaker Silver to follow the example of the Republican-led Senate to stand for houses of worship in poor communities," Cabrera said.

Cabrera, pastor of New Life Outreach International in New York, introduced a resolution in the city council calling on the state legislature to pass and the governor to sign legislation amending the New York state education law to grant houses of worship maximum access to school property.

People on both sides of the issue spoke for more than four hours during a meeting of the city council's education committee Feb. 2, but the committee did not vote on the resolution.

The city council lacks the legislative jurisdiction to change state law, but if passed, the resolution would give the issue greater weight in the state assembly. The resolution, though, first must be voted out of the education committee, and then the city council speaker must schedule a vote before the entire membership of the council.

Cabrera said thousands of New Yorkers are in solidarity with what the Senate bill and the corresponding Assembly bill are trying to achieve.

"Small houses of worship serving primarily needy communities in New York City are in a very bad predicament right now because of a discriminatory policy," he said.

Ray Parascando, pastor of Crossroads Church in Staten Island, N.Y., which has met in a public school for four years, commended the Senate committee when it passed the bill.

"It shows that it's not isolated to churches and pastors that think this is unconstitutional," Parascando told Baptist Press. "It shows that local elected leaders, regardless of their spiritual affiliations, think this is unfair."

The bill says groups should be allowed to gather in schools "even in the event that such meetings include religious content or views in their speech, so long as these meetings are open to the general public."

Church security: Houses of worship are easy burglary targets

By Chester L. Quarles
Correspondent

Final in a seven-part,
aperiodical series

The burglary of worship centers has increased exponentially over the last decade. In 1953, there were only three church burglaries in my capital city. In 1983, there were 47 burglaries during one three-month summer period.

Churches are soft targets, and easy marks because they are

vacant a high percentage of time. The old approach of building a pastorium on-site and adjacent to the church was a strong crime deterrent, but is rarely used as often in contemporary times except in rural settings.

Few churches have alarm systems for fire and criminal activity, closed circuit television cameras, motion detector lights, or other crime deterring electronic aids. With a minimum investment of time and effort, a thief can be home free with a valuable haul.

Many churches don't even lock their doors, leaving them open for all to worship and pray whenever convenient. Worship and the business activities of most churches are highly predictable — just pick up this week's bulletin, where announcements can assist the professional thief in avoiding anyone while committing his or her crime.

While many transient or homeless offenders simply steal food products from the kitchen areas, the most likely value-targets are computers, sophisticated office equipment, musical instruments, sound, and broadcast equipment, and even copper taken from central air conditioning units.

Since older central air conditioning units have a better grade of copper, they are more likely to be targeted than a newer unit. Some churches have been targeted repeatedly within weeks of replacing their units.

There are many approaches which can increase your security. Raise your blinds after hours. Some low-level lights may be left on after-hours. This provides law enforcement a visual access to locked properties and creates an atmosphere that is less conducive to crime.

Many churches that use a safe, place it so that the patrol officer can see it when they make their rounds. Some churches put up signs on their exterior office doors. A statement like "Records only — no cash," or "Deposits are made immediately after the service and are not on site," may deter some criminals. Likewise, a sign may actually be posted on the safe itself, claiming "We do not keep money in this safe."

Checkbooks and church credit cards should be kept in the safe, or at least under lock and key. Checks should be inventoried frequently. Burglars often steal the last check or two, hoping that the missing checks will go undetected for a good period. Never keep pre-signed checks. This is a really bad idea insofar as crime prevention efforts are concerned.

Some Neighborhood Watches include worship centers. Join them if you can. In some cities, police have implemented Church Watch programs. It is a good idea and if your community has one, you should actively participate. Otherwise, use the same precautions that you take at your own home or business.

Crime prevention rules are fairly universal. If it is a good idea for your home or business, it is a good idea for your church.

There are many ways to protect central air and heating units. Lights, alarms, and cages seem to be standard fare. Many units are now placed on roofs, but this ordinarily gives the burglar more privacy so this application may well be disadvantageous in terms of crime prevention.

Many multi-story apartment communities now mount their AC units on towers, making it inconvenient and time consuming to steal the copper. Substantial steel cages can lower your theft likelihood remarkably.

If worship centers are being burglarized locally, be sure to request an interview and a security assessment from your local law enforcement agency. Ideally, you should also talk directly to the police officers or deputies who patrol your site. Listen to their observations carefully and consider their advice.

Additionally, you should encourage church members to observe the parking areas whenever they are driving by. If they see anything suspicious, encourage them to call 911 in order that authorities may investigate.

Quarles is professor emeritus of criminal justice at the University of Mississippi in Oxford and co-author of the book, *Crime Prevention for Houses of Worship*. He may be contacted at cquarles@olemiss.edu. Copyright 2011. Used by permission.

Church plant baptizing in unique way, location

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — When a crowd gathered in the lobby of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Building in downtown Nashville to watch the baptisms of four children, it was a teaching moment for some in the urban community who were not familiar with one of Baptists' foundational experiences.

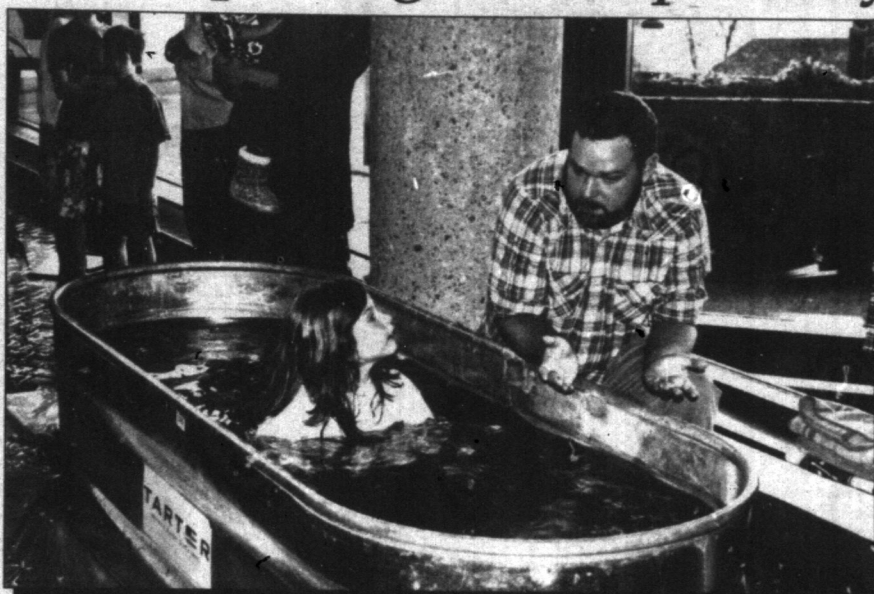
Mosaic Church in Nashville is an eight-year-old church plant that has been meeting in the downtown SBC Building for about two years. The children's baptisms were the first the congregation had done in the building.

The setup meant everyone had to stand to see the baptisms, and people were squeezed into the lobby as well as up the staircase and onto the second floor balcony. Mosaic Church pastor Gary Morgan told Baptist Press.

"I don't know if people's engagement changes because they're standing, but they were all around the baptistry," Morgan said. "Twenty people could touch water almost — everybody's just packed around pretty tight. It was a really, really neat time for us."

Though the church meets in the building's auditorium on the second floor, they moved downstairs for the baptism in order to access water for a portable tank shared by four Nashville church plants that don't have traditional baptisteries.

"It's pretty exciting to see the trough cruising around Nashville going to some different churches," Morgan said.



— ONE IN CHRIST — A unidentified father and daughter from Mosaic Church in Nashville share her story of coming to Christ before he baptized her in the lobby of the Southern Baptist Convention building in downtown Nashville. Mosaic, a church plant, meets in the building. (BP photo)

Two of the children baptized at Mosaic had been reading through Scripture and came to the baptism decision on their own, Morgan said, and two other children had questions and were guided through the process by their parents.

"For us, the baptisms were unique in that both of the dads are in ministry," Morgan said. Both fathers baptized their children that day. One father is preparing to go overseas with the International Mission Board

and the other graduated from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in December.

Morgan, a graduate of New Orleans Seminary, was meeting with one father and his nine-year-old daughter at a Nashville ice cream parlor when she told her pastor why her baptism was so important to her.

"I think about baptism not just for me but for where we're going because our hopes are that people there will know

Jesus and get baptized too," said the girl, whose parents are becoming missionaries, according to Morgan.

"Baptism for her wasn't just about herself and her relationship with Christ," Morgan said. "It was really linking with their getting ready to leave America, and this is a nine-year-old and the commitment that she'd made, so we're in an ice cream parlor, all three crying, trying not to slobber all over our ice cream."

Children are the smallest demographic attending Mosaic Church, Morgan said.

"We're predominantly singles, young couples, college students, and then couples with kids," he said. "I don't know if that's just the urban context that we're in."

A significant number of those who attend Mosaic Church are exploring Jesus and Scripture but aren't yet followers of Christ, Morgan added.

"We can talk about baptism and we can even see pictures of it, but to be right there experiencing it has created a lot of conversation with a lot of people who do not know Christ," he said. "There's a couple right now that I'm interacting with, and different kids from families that don't know Christ. They've asked so many questions it's moved their parents to say, 'Can you help us answer? We don't know.'"

"They're not families that have grown up in church, and for them to even sit with their kids and walk through that is a new thing for them."

For Mosaic Church, ongoing conversations often lead to commitments, Morgan said. "It's about us talking about what is our story — how did we come to follow Christ, how were we baptized — [and] everyone continuing to tell their story."

Also, it's helpful to meet in the SBC Building. Many people who attend Mosaic Church had not been receptive to denominations, Morgan said, so for the church to move into the location, where so much Southern Baptist business is conducted was significant.

Midwestern Seminary president Roberts resigns under pressure

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — The trustees of Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., on Feb. 10 accepted the resignation of seminary president R. Philip Roberts effective Feb. 29 during a called meeting at an airport hotel.

Robin Hadaway, associate professor of missions at the seminary, was named interim president.

Roberts, an 11-year president, was facing questions about misuse of seminary resources and verbal abuse of seminary staff. Other trustee meetings in years past had revolved around those same questions.

The resignation was announced in the afternoon by means of a three-paragraph press release. A morning trustee vote to express lack of confidence in the board's executive committee failed, and at some point in the overall meeting there was a transfer of the chairmanship from Wayne Lee of Southlake, Texas, to Kevin Shrum of Madison, Tn., who emerged as

the sole trustee spokesman for the day's events and the interim board chair until April.

Shrum answered a few questions from the media in mid-afternoon. In answering one inquiry, Shrum said Lee resigned as chairman.

"He felt like he had done what he needed to do," Shrum said. "He's still on the board."

Trustees met early in the morning, with the door of the Ambassador Meeting Room at the Embassy Suites Hotel left open, and after about half an hour Roberts was seen leaving the room.

Roberts then greeted a representative of Baptist Press before walking down the hall to another room with staff and faculty. After saying a quick hello there, according to someone present in the room, he left that room and headed toward the front desk area.

By that time trustees were fully engaged in executive session and had closed the door. Roberts was not to be found.

The resignation was announced in the afternoon by means of a press release. Part of the statement was worded to explain that a meeting to consider the performance of the president was "suspended," and that before that meeting, Roberts tendered his resignation.

The rest of the meeting time in the morning and afternoon was spent in executive session. The press release made no mention of a severance package.

Shrum said that Hadaway, as acting president, will serve through the April board meeting when the board's executive committee will be recommending the process that the seminary will use to move forward in a search for a new president.

Hadaway has been with Midwestern for eight and a half years. He previously served as International Mission Board (IMB) regional leader for eastern South America, supervising more than 300 missionaries in Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

Missouri Baptist Convention Executive Director John Yeats signaled his level of spiritual concern after the news of Roberts' resignation became public. "We just need to be in prayer for the institution, for the faculty, and for the students, for Dr. Hadaway, for Dr. Roberts and his family, and for all the seminary families," he said.

Roberts was elected as Midwestern Seminary's fourth president in January 2001 and began serving that February. Among facility projects during his time were the purchase of the Koehn-Myers building, construction of housing facilities and renovation of many of the seminary's existing buildings.

The seminary is currently building a 1,000-seat chapel complex.

Roberts came to Kansas City after serving seven years with the North American Mission Board (NAMB), where he served as vice president for the Strategic Cities

Strategies Group. He also was director of NAMB's Interfaith Evangelism Department and vice president for urban evangelism and church planting.

In the early 1990s he was professor of missions and evangelism at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and co-directed the Lewis Drummond Center for Great Commission Studies.

Roberts has written several books from an apologetics perspective, most notably on Mormonism, and is known in Europe for his pulpit work in international churches in England, Germany, and Belgium. His Ph.D. is from the Free University of Amsterdam, and he also conducted post-graduate research at Oxford University.

Among the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders who came to Kansas City for the Feb. 10 meeting was Bryant Wright, SBC president. He left the meeting room before Shrum released the official statement and had no comment.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Center of My Belief

Colossians 2:8-23

By Burn Page

About twenty-five years ago I heard of the *Stockholm Syndrome*. The term first occurred in 1973 at an attempted bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden. A man who attempted to rob a bank was caught inside and took three female prisoners and one male prisoner whom he held for 131 hours. During that time he terrorized them by firing his automatic weapon at them and by threatening to kill them with hanging by placing nooses around their necks. But he did not harm them in any way. However, when he surrendered, the unexpected happened. The hostages were not antagonistic toward him; instead, they said they feared the police more than the hostage taker. They refused to testify against him, and in fact, one of the women became engaged to him.

Why such a strange response to a life threatening situation? Psychologists said that in hostage situations, with a high level of life-threatening stress and positive human interaction, the people begin to deny what is really happening. They transfer their hate from the hostage taker (the one who is threatening to harm them) to the policemen (the ones who are trying to save them). They begin to see the bad person in a good way and the good person in a bad way.

Paul began this section of scripture (v. 8) with the words, "See to it that no one takes you hostage (NIV: captive)!" The young congregation was in danger of being "captivated" by a false doctrine which Paul referred to as a "hollow and deceptive philosophy." This false doctrine struck at the very heart



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of the Christian faith. The theological threat was two-fold: (1) it attacked the person and work of Christ through the cross (soteriology: how a person is saved) and (2) the development of personal purity (sanctification: how a person grows more like Christ).

The "philosophy" that was being advocated by false teachers was founded on traditions of man and worldly principles rather than the bedrock truth of Christ. Such a teaching was incompatible with and contrary to the work of Christ on the cross.

In regards to salvation, Paul admonished his readers to choose fullness over emptiness (vs. 8-15). They were to choose Christ for "in Christ the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." Paul was stating that Jesus is fully God. The fullness refers to the completeness of his divine nature, and the location of this Deity is "in bodily form." In the "form" of Christ we have the reality of God. God was fully in Christ and the

Colossian believers had been given fullness in him.

There is no fullness in philosophy based on vain human reasoning. Fullness is found in Christ. You are going to be full of something — pride, anger, bitterness, etc. However, to be filled with Christ is to be filled with the presence and power and riches of God who is in Christ. This fullness was given them at the cross when Christ performed a spiritual circumcision and removed their sinful (fleshly) nature that leads to death. Paul connected circumcision with baptism. They were "buried with him in baptism" and "raised with him... in the power of God" because at the cross, Christ "defeated" or "disgraced" all the powers and authorities. The latter term is derived from the idea of being "stripped" in public of all rank or power. Christian baptism is seen as a burial whereby a believer is placed in an environment incapable of sustaining life — a watery grave. It also pictures the power of being resurrected to a new environment of life.

In regards to sanctification, Paul admonished his readers to

choose substance over shadows (vs. 16-19) and to choose relationship over rules (20-23). The substance of the Christian life is Christ, not the shadows of legalistic observances or mystical experiences. Legalism is any philosophy or movement that assumes God's blessings come from keeping the law. It assumes a contractual relationship whereby, in one's thoughts, God can be bought by human effort (Melick). The Colossians were being led by false teachers to embrace an ascetic life (16-17) or angel worship (18-19). Paul knew that if human effort is effective, then the work of Christ is unnecessary. Christ, rather than human experiences, determines spiritual reality. So don't let yourself be taken captive by that which is false and empty; rather, surrender to the fullness found in Christ. Human regulations can change only the environment; only Christ can change the heart.

Page is chair of the Department of Christian Studies and Philosophy at Mississippi College and a member of First Church, Clinton.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Be Repentant

Deuteronomy 30:1-4, 6-8, 15-20

By Melleen Moore

This study is from Deuteronomy and about the Israelites just prior to entering the promised land. However, with the title 'be repentant', it could be about today to the nation of America. Looking closely at 'us', some of the same disobedient acts that were common among the Children of Israel can be seen. Moses continued to prepare the way for crossing the Jordan River into Canaan. He showed through a dramatic contrast from Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27) — the blessing of obedience and the curse of disobedience. The Children of Israel would reap the harvests of their choice. Obedience would bring prosperity and protection. Disobedience would reap poverty and defeat. Moses gave a warning of choosing disobedience and the horrifying consequences. He called for

a renewal of God's covenant with His people. It was a simple act with profound meaning to make an oath to be His people and He to be their God.

Repentance is Possible

Deuteronomy 30:1-4

Moses is painting a futuristic picture for the Children of Israel. In a sense, he is prophesying times of blessings as the Israelites battle with the inhabitants of Canaan. However, times of curses were prophesied as the Israelites embraced sin and disobedience in worshipping gods of wood and stone. God gave a futuristic promise in saying "When all these things happen (the blessings and curses)...and you come to your senses" (Deuteronomy 30:1, HCSB) as well as repenting and obeying. He would restore their fortune. His promise was to restore with



Moore

compassion, bringing the Children of Israel back from all the nations where they had been scattered. Before this restoration would take place, repentance and obedience with commitment of the total being — heart and soul had to occur. Nowhere was too far for God to find His children "even if your exiles are at the ends of the earth" (Deuteronomy 30: 4, HCSB). As God looked forward into the future with His divine knowledge, he could see the divided kingdoms and ultimately the fall of the nation of Israel and Judah. However, repentance was possible and forgiveness on the horizon available for the asking.

God Works in Repentant Hearts

Deuteronomy 30:6-8

Moses called for circumcised hearts — the idea being to love God with purity and a willingness to hear and obey. A circumcised heart would be a spiritual act, enabled by God himself. It was God's salvation, transform-

ing the nature of the heart and its relationship with God. Paul in Romans 2:29 stated "circumcision is that of the heart, in Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (NKJV). The statement in verse six "so that you will live" (Deuteronomy 30, HCSB) brings to mind fullness of life — not just breath but to experience God in the greatest sense possible to 'really live' in obedience and blessing. The picture into the future continues as God places the curse of the enemies of the Children of Israel who have hated and persecuted them. The painting is now in full color with every artist technique available and inscribed "You will again obey Him and follow all His commands" (Deuteronomy 30:8, HCSB). What does complete obedience and the following of God look like? This painting would be a gift from God with divine empowerment — not human power. To enjoy this gift and other blessings of the abundant life, the Israelites would listen to God's law and be obedient to His Word in wholehearted faithfulness.

Life comes Down to a Choice

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

The painting is complete, putting the choice in the heart and hands of the Israelites — "life and prosperity, death and adversity" (Deuteronomy 30: 15, HCSB). It is God's desire to bless the Children of Israel in the promised land. But the choice was theirs. God's command was to follow His ways, commands, statutes and ordinances to live long and multiply in the promised land. To be disobedient and turn their hearts to bow to other gods, the consequences were plainly stated to perish and lose possession of the land. Moses had faithfully proclaimed the choices and now the decision and action was to be made by the Israelites. Keeping the covenant relationship would be to love God, obey Him and remain faithful. Entering the promised land was on the near horizon as was the choice of obedience or disobedience.

Moore is a member of Macedonia Church, Petal.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

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Churches observe 'Month of Love'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — February sometimes is called the "Month of Love," with Valentine's week especially being a time when people not only send cards and gifts to loved ones, but also when families and churches give special attention to the meaning of true love and the value of saving sex for marriage.

Many churches hold annual True Love Waits ceremonies for young people who make commitments to remain abstinent until their wedding day. The churches then provide encouragement and support to the youth in the months and years ahead.

Tokens, such as a True Love Waits ring or necklace, offer a

tangible reminder of the commitment and add to the power of the ceremony.

In the United States alone, approximately three million youth have signed True Love Waits commitment cards in various events and settings, pledging sexual purity until their marital vows. Another 1.1 million commitments have been documented in Africa, and hundreds of thousands of commitment cards from youth throughout the world have been displayed at several events, including the 2004 Olympics in Athens.

"The True Love Waits transition from a sex-education concept sketched out on a napkin in 1992 to an interna-

tional movement has been nothing short of remarkable," TLW spokeswoman Dawn Cornelius said.

"Throughout the world, scores of young people continue to take a counter-cultural stand and embrace biblical purity."

True Love Waits originated with, and is a division of, LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

As TLW's call for sexual purity approaches its 20-year mark in 2013, LifeWay continues to provide themes and direction for churches and families to help students with their commitments, as well as new resources to assist parents as the spiritual leaders for their children.

For this year's Valentine's Day, True Love Waits has highlighted several ideas for churches and families, including:

- Plan a special True Love Waits study. This idea can take different forms. Some churches may want to use their Sunday School or small group time during February to share a series of lessons on God's plan for sexu-



A LifeWay Ministry

ality. Other churches might hold a TLW-focused Disciple Now (DNow) weekend. Whatever the form, the combination of fun events and meaningful study can have a significant impact.

Churches don't have to focus on only the kids. February can be a time to bring parents together for a short study as well. The Path of Purity: A Family Guide includes a six-session leader guide online to facilitate discussion about purity in the family. For a shorter

study, Pure Parenting gives parents some practical help for creating a culture of purity in their homes over the course of four weeks.

- Plan a special event. A ceremony makes a huge impression on a teenager. Planning a special event such as a father-daughter or mother-son dinner can help reinforce the message of purity and give parents some footholds for continuing the conversation later.

- Plan a sermon (or a series of sermons) on purity. Messages that come from the pulpit tend to carry a sense of importance and priority for a church's life.

"The message of abstinence is too vital to ignore," Cornelius said. "We encourage churches to take advantage of the opportunities February provides and build on those opportunities throughout the year."

For more information and TLW resources, visit www.truelovewaits.com. To access the True Love Waits blog, go to http://blogs.lifeway.com/blog/true_love_waits.

"Throughout the world, scores of young people continue to take a counter-cultural stand and embrace biblical purity."

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— Dawn Cornelius
spokeswoman
True Love Waits

Obama spokesman confirms opposition to Prop 8

Republican presidential hopefuls respond to Court of Appeals' decision to override voters

WASHINGTON (BP) — U.S. President Barack Obama remains opposed to California Proposition 8's definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman, his press secretary said Tuesday as three of the Republican presidential candidates affirmed their support for it and opposition to a controversial appeals court ruling.

Obama's position on constitutional marriage amendments is "well-known and he's long opposed divisive and discriminatory efforts to deny rights and benefits to same-sex couples," said Jay Carney, his press secretary.

Carney would not say whether Obama agreed with a decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals striking down Prop 8, which passed in 2008. As a candidate in 2008, Obama opposed Prop 8 while also publicly opposing homosexual marriage — a position that many, including his own supporters, saw as inconsistent.

A reporter tried to pin down Obama's position. "So isn't it inconsistent for the President to [...] not support same-sex marriage and also to be against such measures?" the reporter asked.

"Well," Carney responded, "I don't have any update for you on that par-

ticular issue with regards to the President's views. I can tell you that divisive and discriminatory efforts to deny rights and benefits to same-sex couples are something that this President has long opposed."

Three of the four Republican candidates for president — Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum, and Newt Gingrich — released statements opposing the court's decision, while Ron Paul did not. Following are their statements:

- Mitt Romney: "Today, unelected judges cast aside the will of the people of California who voted to protect traditional marriage. This decision does not end this fight, and I expect it to go to the Supreme Court. That prospect underscores the vital importance of this election and the movement to preserve our values. I believe marriage is between a man and a woman and, as president, I will protect traditional marriage and appoint judges who interpret the Constitution as it is written and not according to their own politics and prejudices."

- Rick Santorum: "Today's decision by the 9th Circuit is another in a long line of radical activist rulings by this rogue circuit — and it is precisely

why I have called for that circuit to be abolished and split up. Marriage is defined and has always been defined as 'one man and one woman.' We simply cannot allow 50 different definitions of marriage. The people of California spoke clearly at the ballot box that they wanted marriage defined in the traditional manner of one man and one woman. And for a court, any court, to usurp the power and will of the people in this manner on an issue this fundamental to the foundation of our society is wrong. We need to have a Judicial Branch that acts within its Constitutional bounds. We need to have a President that is willing to stand up to the Judiciary. We need to have a President who will fight to protect marriage once and for all with a federal marriage amendment. I am committed to being that President."

- Newt Gingrich: "With today's decision on marriage by the Ninth Circuit, and the likely appeal to the Supreme Court, more and more Americans are being exposed to the radical overreach of federal judges and their continued assault on the Judeo-Christian foundations of the United States. I was drawn back into public life by the Ninth Circuit's 2002 decision that held that the words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance were unconstitutional. Today's decision is one more example that the American people cannot rest

until we restore the proper rule of the judicial branch and bring judges and the Courts back under the Constitution. The Constitution of the United States begins with 'We the People'; it does not begin with 'We the Judges.' Federal judges need to take heed of that fact. Federal judges are substituting their own political views for the constitutional right of the people to make judgments about the definition of marriage. The country has been here before. In 1856, the Supreme Court thought it could settle the issue of slavery once and for all and impose a judicial solution on the country. In 1973, the issue was abortion and once again a Supreme Court thought that it could impose a judicial solution on the country once and for all. Judicial solutions don't solve contentious social issues once and for all. Should the Supreme Court fail to heed the disastrous lessons of its own history and attempt to impose its will on the marriage debate in this country by affirming today's Ninth Circuit decision, it will bear the burden of igniting a constitutional crisis of the first order. The political branches of the federal government, as well as the political branches of the several States, will surely not passively accept the dictates of the federal judiciary on this issue. An interventionist approach by the Court on marriage will lead to a crisis of legitimacy for the federal judiciary from which it may take generations to recover."